



Taminophile

A *bel canto* bear... in a *verismo* world

Monday, July 30, 2018

Medea at Teatro Nuovo

On Sunday I ventured to Purchase College to see Teatro Nuovo's Bel Canto Festival present *Medea in Corinto*, a neglected opera by equally neglected composer Giovanni Simone Mayr. Mayr's works were a great influence on the compositions of Rossini. Rossini admired *Medea in Corinto*, and is said to have claimed it is "...always dramatic, always sings, and is always melodic...." I quite like it myself, and think it might have a place in today's opera houses. And I found Sunday's performance to be a treat, both musically and theatrically. The performance was semi-staged, and there were many moments of gripping drama.

Of course I was there to hear the lovely Jennifer Rowley as Medea. All of the reasons we love Ms Rowley's singing were there in abundance--beautiful, rich sound, dazzling and sensitive artistry, and absolute commitment to her character. I could not take my eyes off of her whenever she was on stage. Her solo scenes left me breathless--especially the Act II monologue when she considers killing the children she shares with Giasone (Jason) as an act of vengeance. Every conflicting and terrifying and agonizing emotion was clear.



Jennifer Rowley
Photo: Fay Fox



Teresa Castillo
Photo: Kaleigh Rae Photography

I liked all of the other singers, too. Teresa Castillo, as Creusa, the woman Giasone marries, has a beautiful sound throughout and is a very expressive singer. She lists some impressive achievements in her brief bio, and I hope I'll hear her again soon. Tenor Derrek Stark was a proud and manly Giasone, with a very nice sound and ringing high notes. I liked baritone William Lee Bryan as Creonte, King of Corinth and father to Creusa, and I also liked Mingjie Lei as Egeo, King of Athens, to whom Creusa had been promised before Giasone came along.

The highly skilled Teatro Nuovo Orchestra played under Jonathan Brandani, *maestro al cembalo*, and Jakob Lehmann, *primo violino e capo d'orchestra*. The two took it in turns guiding the orchestra, but the ensemble seemed to play so intuitively together that a conductor in the modern sense would have been superfluous. I never sensed a moment when the orchestra wasn't playing as one, and I never sensed a moment when orchestra and stage were not in sync.

I hope this opera is performed more often. It has more merits than some other neglected operas, and the story from Euripides, in this case adapted by librettist Felice Romani, never fails to capture our imaginations. We are fortunate that there is another performance at the Bel Canto Festival on August 4. I would encourage one and all to see it.

at [11:07 PM](#)

